

The White-throated Kingfisher
(Halcyon smyrenensis) in Northern Luzon

The White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smythmani*) is widely distributed in southern Asia (Krug and Dickinson, 1943). The species inhabits areas of open and semi-open habitat to semi-wetland, and its common range includes much of West Malaysia (Günther, 1953). It has been generally supposed, however, to be absent from Sumatra (Delmon, 1947; Green-Hill, 1949; Peters, —; Van Steen, 1977). The supposition is now being revised.

is quite considerable.

Given the lack of earlier records, the population may be assumed to be the result of a recent invasion. There is no evidence to indicate a precise date. But Mr. and Mrs. Smith found the birds in the plantation in 1974, when Van Strien failed to see them during an earlier visit to the same area in 1971 - (pers. comm.).

Invasions may be envisaged as occupying "vacant" niches, often newly created ones. For example, the White-throated Kingfisher of Sumatra are an example. It is known that they have been extirpated in historical times. Now the forest is being cleared at a rapid rate for the spread of both subsistence farming and commercial plantations. While the other resident kingfishers of the island (with the possible exception of the *chloris*) seem to be able to settle in open or semi-open areas to some numbers. Thus, the invading White-throated Kingfisher, possibly just an environmental bird was new for Sumatra, and probably free of disease but not necessarily free of parasites. It is not surprising that the invaders have survived. It is likely that the reason they continue to spread is that they are not being preyed upon.

The occupation of the new area does not seem to be a major ecological shift by the new species.

The invasion process is not yet understood. It is likely that the birds are invading the new area by flying from the old area. It is also possible that they are being introduced by escapes from captivity.

Note: 8:10 A.M.

Capturing

Oct. 14th.

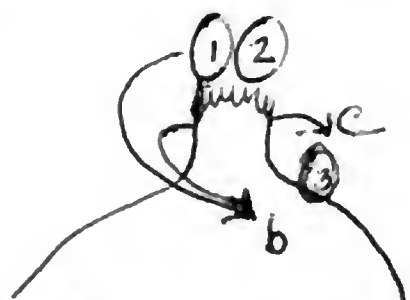
A hornbill just flew by (looked like the black one) ~~and~~ over the houses (betw. front row + pump). Roller that was on cocorocho chased it, vocalizing loudly. Did not attack it, just flew behind and over it abt. 2 mts. distant. Hornbill did not react but went on flying non-stop, (w/out gliding). Roller chased it just beyond the houses and turned back to its perch, w/out vocalizing. Both birds were fairly high.

Voc = Rattle

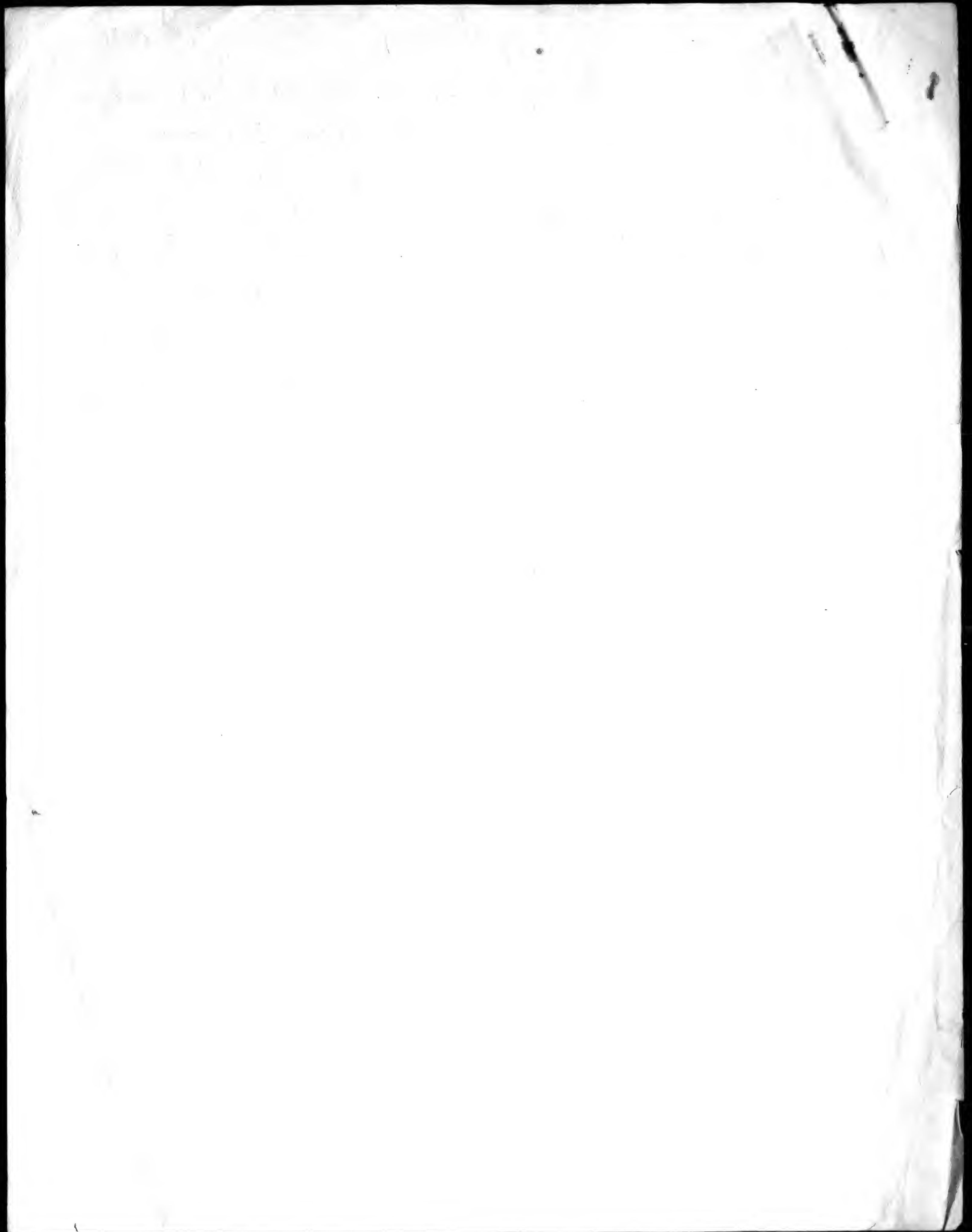
Note 9:05 A.M.

Three rollers on perch; sitting quietly

Roller = Bluebelly



then ② nudged ①; looked like grooming, but bird ① had to jump to position b; stayed there while ② looked down. Then ① went hopping around to position c and attacked bird ③. Bird ③ retaliated and both flew off chasing each other. Shortly after, bird ② flew off in same direction. Happened fairly fast. Ten mts. later had not returned.



- 7:22 - one bird in usual haue (farthest off)
7:07 - gone; scared off by ~~the~~ a man.
7:25 - no birds still (from 7:07); not in beach
either
7:45 - still no birds
7:55 - one bird moved in, same place;
flew from nearby palm on same
side. (At 8:00 workers start arriving)
8:02 - bird same place; another flew in direction of beach
8:05 - bird still there.
8:15 - single bird is gone.
8:30 - no birds; the people are not working
near.
8:45 - one roller on nearby palm

Bluebellies. Annexe Hotel Aubert. Oct. 15, 1976.

Casamance, Senegal

(15.1.2)

Phoeniculus purpureus would seem to fit into the roller - kingfisher scheme very well. (Perhaps even parallel or convergent to Ceryle rudis?)

Is the absence of long in Ceryle functionally related to the development of sexual dimorphism in color ???

Doubtless the generally bright coloration of Halcyon is correlated with hole-nesting. (And independent hunting?)

Halcyon spp. are improved Coracias; 82.

Increased terrestriality probably has evolved several times in the genus Halcyon; 86.

Migratory and sedentary Halcyon may have different pairing strategies; 87.

No jabbing during fights; 149.

Coraciiformes

RIJKSMUSEUM VAN NATUURLIJKE HISTORIE

RAAMSTEEG 2, LEIDEN, NEDERLAND — TELEFOON 071-14 38 44

CORRESPONDENTIE-ADRES: POSTBUS 9517, 2300 RA LEIDEN

Dr. M. H. Moynihan
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Box 2072
Balboa
Panama Kanaal Zone

Leiden, June 12th 1979.

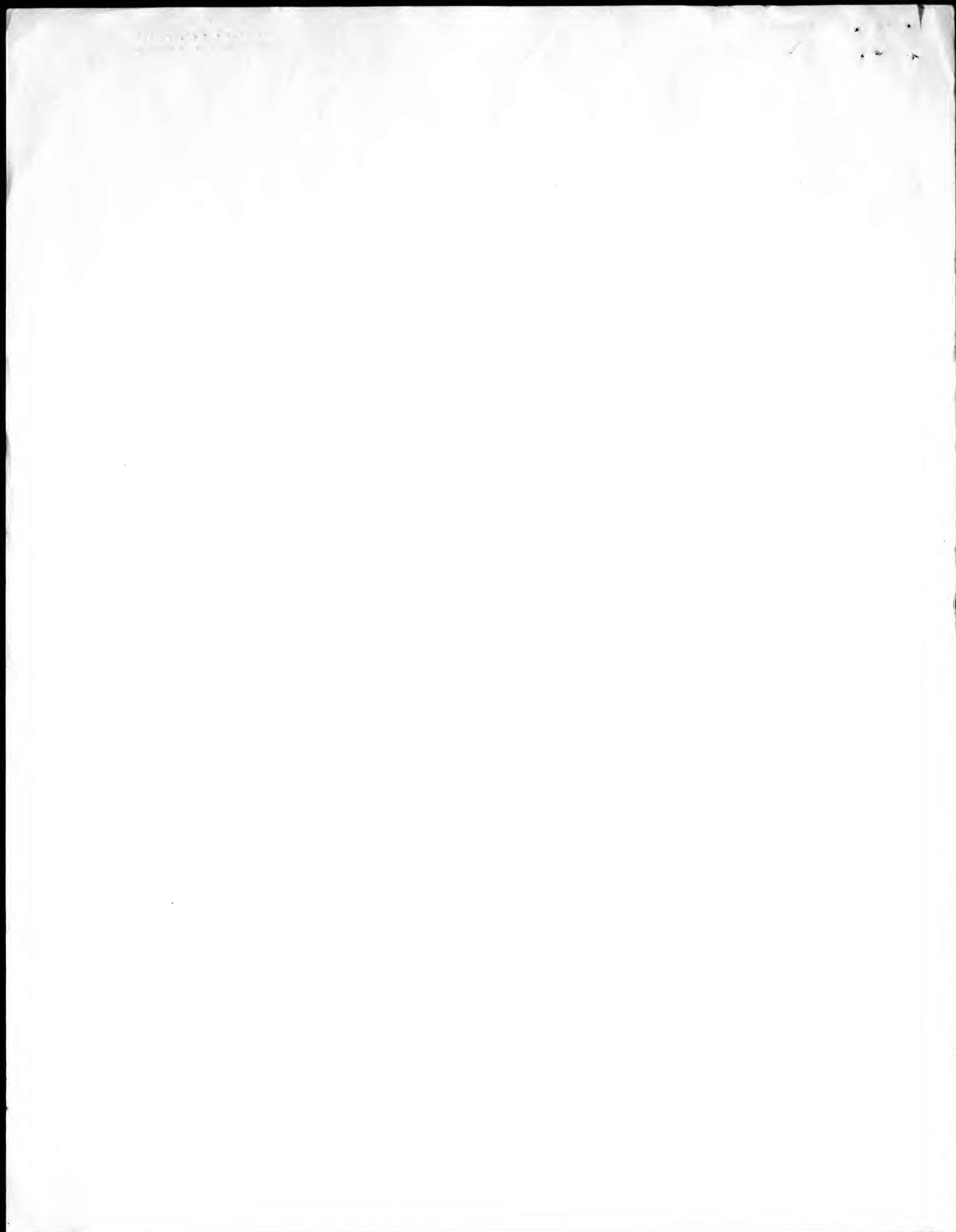
Dear Dr. Moynihan,

There is very little I can tell you about Halcyon smyrnensis in addition to the information contained in my last letter, but it seems indeed clear to me that in both Sumatra and Java the species is a new colonist.

In the large collections made in Deli in the early years of this century (1912-1915) by Dr. P.L. de Bussy (published 1919, by de Beaufort & de Bussy, Bijdr. Dierk. 21: 229-276; more unpublished material in our collection) there is no mention of H. smyrnensis, although nine species of Alcedinidae were collected. Yet, Baron van Lynden, Thirty years later, called it the commonest kingfisher in the same region. Surely this indicates, yes practically proves, recent colonization.

In the article mentioned above, de Bussy makes an interesting remark in the discussion of H. chloris, of which I give here a free translation: "This species is very common everywhere along the coast.... for many years I have never seen it far from the coast, such in strong contrast to its behaviour in Java, where for example near Buitenzorg, not to mention many other places, it is numerous. In 1915, however, to my surprise, I discovered it in the Highlands in the neighbourhood of Kaban Djahé, hence far into the interior. This distribution is peculiar as the species does not appear to occur in the intervening country". From this it would appear that in the Bussy's time H. chloris did not occur in the cultivated lowlands (where indeed it is common in Java). This may be connected with the fact that colonization of Deli by tobacco planters began only about 1860 or 1870, in what previously was heavy forest. Open cultivated country must have been a new habitat in Deli, that in the Bussy's time had not yet been colonized by H. chloris, and this may possibly have given H. smyrnensis its opportunity. You will realize that this is only speculation, as I have no personal experience in Deli. Did you see H. chloris there?

West Java is ornithologically so well-known, that I am sure that if H. smyrnensis ever occurred there as more than a rare straggler, it would have been recorded. Even now there is only this single case of breeding known so that the species can hardly be said to be established in Java. Its appearance is even more recent than in Sumatra. In this case the explanation suggested above for Sumatra, that there was an open niche available, is invalid as in Java H. chloris is common in cultivated country.



RIJKSMUSEUM VAN NATUURLIJKE HISTORIE

RAAMSTEEG 2, LEIDEN, NEDERLAND — TELEFOON 071-14 38 44

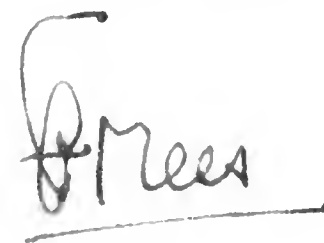
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- 2 -

Leiden,

Conclusion: H. smyrnensis colonized eastern Sumatra (Deli) about sixty years ago, following forest clearing and other human activities. In Java there is even now no evidence that it has actually settled and further developments must be awaited. You could ask Wells how the species H. chloris and H. smyrnensis interact in Malaya.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. F. Mees', with a horizontal line underneath.

G. F. Mees

May 18, 1979

Dr. G.F. Mees
Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke
Historie
Raamsteeg 2
Postbus 9517, 2300 RA
Leiden, Nederland

Dear Dr. Mees:

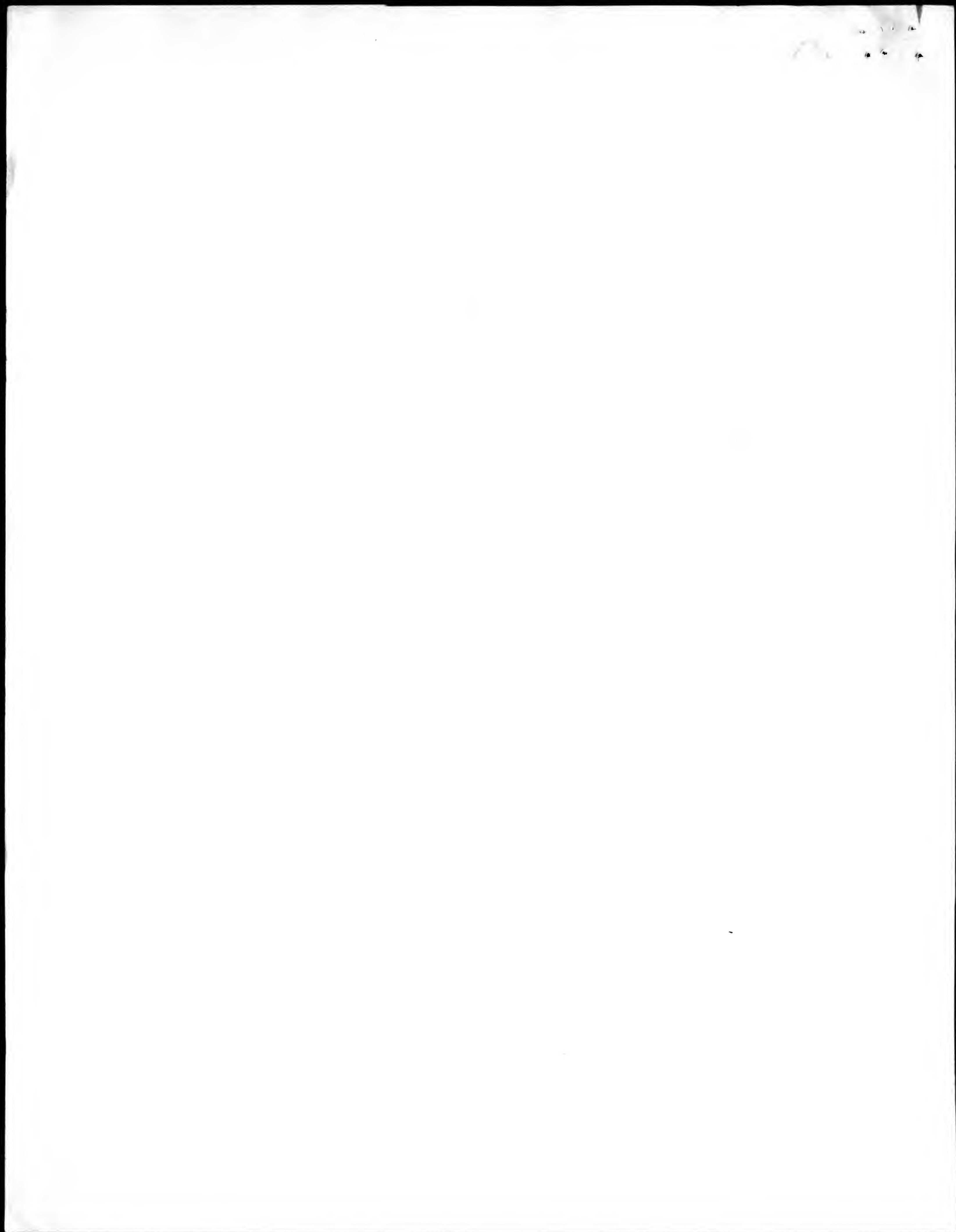
Thank you for your letter of May 2nd with the information on Halcyon smyrnensis in Sumatra and Java. It was very helpful indeed.

One of the subjects in which I am ~~most~~ interested is competition among species (with all the behavioral interactions involved). I wonder, therefore, how the relations between smyrnensis and other Halcyon kingfishers, especially chloris, will eventually evolve (or settle down) in Sumatra. In this context, it would be useful to know if the Sumatran smyrnensis are relatively recent invaders or a relict of some earlier, Pleistocene or post-Pleistocene, expansion. Do you know of any data that would be relevant to this question?

Yours sincerely,

15/
Martin H. Moynihan
Senior Scientist

Let orig. letter to Dr. M.



1 copy and return

